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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, March 29

09:58

Met at Kantei with Chairman Ito of the expert panel on relocation of national servants' dormitory and use of vacant site, joined by Administrative Vice Finance Minister Hosokawa and Financial Bureau chief Makino.

11:08

Met with GLOBE Japan head Yatsu, and primary school students in Tokyo and Okayama Prefecture, who study environment problem. Met later with Matsuoka, chairman of the LDP Commission on Trade in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Products.

14:00

Met National Association of Commercial Broadcasters Chairman-designate Hirose, followed by chirographer Yamakawa and his wife, as well as New Komeito Upper House Chairman Kusakawa.

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15:01

Met with LDP Secretary General Takebe and New Komeito Secretary General Fuyushiba. Met afterwards with Japan Federation of Bar Association incoming and outgoing chairmen Hirayama and Kajitani.

16:31

Met with Osaka Gov. Ota and Fukuoka Mayor Yamasaki, promoters of the forum on promotion of direct foreign investments in Japan.

17:06

Met Hamburg Sakura Queen Bachmann and Japanese Sakura Queen Miki. Attended later meeting of Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy.

19:18

Had haircut at barber in Capital Tokyo Hotel.

20:18

Returned to his official residence.

4) In interview, US Ambassador to UN Bolton warns Japan on Iran nuclear issue, seeks to constrain from placing priority on oil business

By Hiroyuki Nakamae in New York

In an interview with the Nihon Keizai Shimbun on March 28, US Ambassador to the United Nations Bolton commented on the issue of Iran's nuclear issue: "I ask Japan not to be pressed into a dilemma on the nuclear proliferation issue by Iran, which is using oil resources as its shield." He sought to constrain Japan from being weak-kneed on the nuclear issue because of its oil industry's strong ties with Iran. He also took a negative stand on reform of the UN Security Council, which Japan is using in its bid for a permanent seat on the Council, saying, "There is no enthusiasm for debating this in the UN General Assembly."

The UNSC is now discussing the issue of Iran's nuclear program, having been entrusted with it by the IAEA. The US is taking a hard-line stance that includes the possibility of sanctions against Iran. In the interview, the Ambassador gave Japan high marks, saying, "Japan has a praiseworthy history on nuclear non-proliferation issues." He urged Japan to go along with the US' stance.

In addition, he stressed, "Iran aims at expanding its influence as a major (oil) supplier." He indicated that he considered Iran to be aiming to use oil as a weapon to obtain developments that would advantage its position. Japan has a high dependency on oil imports and has obtained the rights to develop the Azadegan oil field in Southwest Iran. The Ambassador warned Japan not be influenced by Iran's tactics.

5) Japan's cooperation with US over permanent UNSC seat unsuccessful; Government puts off submission of UNSC reform resolution

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)  
March 30, 2006

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The government has given up on its plan to present a UNSC reform resolution designed to expand the number of members from the current 15 to 21. It made this decision because the US, Japan's only hope, was cold to the idea and the proposal failed to obtain wide support from UN member nations. Japan now finds itself in a tight corner with a second failure to obtain a permanent seat on the UNSC, following last year's failed attempt.

The government, along with Germany, Brazil, and India (G-3), submitted a resolution last July to increase the number of UNSC members to 25. The proposal was, however, killed after meeting opposition from the US.

Reflecting on this outcome, Japan switched its policy to promoting closer ties with the US. Giving consideration to that nation, which is cool to the idea of expanding the UNSC, Japan independently drafted a plan consisting of the following proposals: (1) the number of UNSC member nations should be increased to 21; (2) A permanent seat can be awarded to a candidate that secured support from more than two-thirds (128 nations) of the UN member nations in balloting; (3) candidates that failed to secure support from more than two thirds should be given a semi-permanent membership with a renewable four-year term, which is longer than the non-permanent membership (two-year term, not renewable). Japan began explaining its proposal to other member nations in late January.

However, US Ambassador to UN Bolton expressed a negative view. In addition, the G-3 and the African Union (AU) had already submitted their own UNSC expansion resolutions. As a result, Japan's new initiative failed to obtain wide support.

6) Foreign Ministry poll: 78% say Japan-China relations "should be repaired"

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
March 30, 2006

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) yesterday released the findings of a survey of perception about Japan-China relations. The poll showed 77.9% of the respondents said Japan-China relations should be repaired, highlighting the concern shared by a large number of the public about the currently strained relations with China due to such factors as Prime Minister Koizumi's repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine.

The survey was conducted on a total of 2,000 men and women over 20 years of age nationwide on Feb. 10-13. The response rate was 65.7%.

In response to the question of what do you think about the current Japan-China relations, only 6.9% of the respondents said, "Japan has favorable relations with China," while 66.7% of the respondents said, "I don't think Japan has favorable relations with China." When asked whether Japan should improve relations with China, 12.0% of the respondents said, "Japan should keep the status quo."

When the respondents were asked to pick more than one issue lying between Japan and China, the largest percentage of the respondents cited "the issue involving past events, including historical perception" with 58.9%, followed by "the lack of

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mutual understanding between the two nations" with 32.1%,  
"disagreement on policy in international politics" with 30.2%,  
and "the issue relating to marine interests" with 28.7%.

7) Leaders of 7 Japanese friendship organizations will arrive in China today, meet with President Hu tomorrow

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)  
March 30, 2006

The Japanese delegation led by former Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto of leaders of seven Japan-China friendship organizations will travel to China starting today and meet with President Hu Jintao in Beijing tomorrow. They will visit China in response to the China-Japan Friendship Association's invitation to them to visit China. Attention is now focused on what message the top Chinese leader will signal to Japan regarding the currently chilly relations between the two nations due to Prime Minister Koizumi's continued visits to Yasukuni Shrine.

The delegation consists of leaders -- including Hashimoto who chairs the Association for the Promotion of International Trade, Japan -- of seven Japanese organizations, for instance, the Japan-China Friendship Parliamentary League chaired by former Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura and the Japan-China Friendship Association chaired by Professor Emeritus Ikuo Hirayama of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. For the seven organizations, this is their first joint visit to China.

The planned dialogue between President Hu and Japanese politicians will follow the last one in last May held in China between Hu and the secretaries general of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito. In the upcoming dialogue, Hu is expected to deliver an important speech concerning relations with Japan.

8) Prime Minister Koizumi to visit Ethiopia, Ghana during Golden Week holidays

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)  
March 30, 2006

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi will visit Ethiopia, Ghana, and Sweden from April 29 to May 5, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe revealed yesterday at a press conference. Koizumi will be the first Japanese prime minister to visit Sweden. He is expected to exchange views with his counterparts on Japan's economic assistant for their countries, among other issues. He told reporters last night at the Prime Minister's Official Residence: "I'm not looking for short-term success. My aim is to improve friendly relations with other countries."

9) High school textbook screening: Education Ministry seeks accurate descriptions such as South Korea occupies Japan's Takeshima islands

SANKEI (Page 1) (Excerpts)  
March 30, 2006

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology revealed yesterday the results of the screening of high school textbooks to be used from next spring. The ministry

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called for more accurate accounts in describing such issues as territorial disputes, North Korea's abductions of Japanese nationals, as well as such words as "gender." Publishers have corrected the parts. However, there still remain many inappropriate descriptions centered on modern history, such as repeating the general understanding that there were more than 200,000 victims in the Nanjing Massacre.

The number of descriptions on the Takeshima Islands (Okinoshima Town in Tottori Prefecture) and the Senkaku Islands (Ishigaki City in Okinawa Prefecture) increased from that of the previous screening (in 2001). Almost all textbooks, excluding geography

and history, as well as world history, mention those islands. Of the 40 descriptions, the ministry called on publishers to clearly stipulate in 26 descriptions that those islands are Japanese territory.

On the Senkaku Islands, the ministry explained: "Unlike the Northern Islands and Takeshima Island, since Japan effectively controls the Senkaku Islands, no territorial dispute exists." The ministry continued: "Since the Northern Territories and the Takeshima Island, which are Japanese territories, have been seized by Russia and South Korea, respectively, there remain territorial disputes with those countries. Although the Senkaku Islands belong to Japan, China and other countries have claimed sovereignty over them."

10) Aso suggests capping Japan's share in Guam relocation cost at 50% in bid to elicit compromise from US; Reaching agreement in mid-April aimed for

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
March 30, 2006

Touching on the question of cost sharing for the planned relocation of US Marines from Okinawa to Guam, Foreign Minister Taro Aso stated before the Lower House Special Committee on the Northern Part of Okinawa yesterday, "We would like to decided on it by mid-April." Aso's statement reflected the government's intention to reach an accord with the US in mid-April after arriving at a general agreement at the Japan-US senior working-level talks to be held April 4-6. Aso also said regarding Japan's share, "I would like to see it cut down to below 50%. There is only so much we can bear."

Five cabinet ministers, including Aso and Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga, held talks March 28 and confirmed that Japan would only be able to shoulder up to 50% of the total cost estimated at 10 billion dollars. In other words, they approved setting a ceiling on Japan's share at 50%, which also coincides with the prevalent view in the government and the ruling coalition that Japan should settle on paying half of the total cost. Japan seemingly intends to elicit compromise from the US by offering more than it did before but still within a range that is convincing to the public.

But Aso also told the Lower House committee: "We may be able to obtain an understanding on funding housing and the like, but military facilities are out of the question. Rather than focusing on the amount, we mustn't lose sight of the logic." In order for the government to provide direct outlays of 5 billion dollars, instead of loans, to cover facilities beyond housing, a new logic

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would be necessary.

The US response remains unclear. To accomplish the Guam relocation in a short period of time, there is only so much the US can bear, according to a source in the Foreign Ministry. US Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Richard Lawless also said: "The relocation is happening at Japan's request, so it is only natural to ask Japan to foot 75% of the bill."

If Japan exhibits a conciliatory stance, the US may press Japan harder for more compromises. For this reason, Japan is expected to decide on whether to broach the 50% ceiling in the next round of talks while carefully watching Washington's move. In a press conference yesterday, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said this about capping Japan's share, "The government has not set any target."

11) Foreign Minister Aso says Japan should hold down its share of the cost of relocation of US Marines to Guam to "below 50% "

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
March 30, 2006

At a meeting yesterday of the Upper House Special Committee on

Okinawa and the Northern Territories, Foreign Minister Aso referred to Japan's share of the cost of the planned relocation of US Marines in Okinawa to Guam as part of the realignment of US forces in Japan and noted: "I'd like to somehow hold down our share to below 50%. I've no intention to concede to a 50% share, but I can't tell now where the point of compromise is." His remarks are construed as indicating Japan cannot accept the US call on Japan to pay 75% of the 10-billion-dollar relocation cost estimated by the US government.

12) Futenma relocation: Seaweed bed, restricted waters hold key to local coordination

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Abridged)  
March 30, 2006

The government and Okinawa Prefecture's Nago City have been coordinating over the issue of relocating the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station from the island prefecture's city of Ginowan to a coastal area of Camp Schwab in Nago. In the meantime, seaweed beds and restricted waters in the offshore area of Camp Schwab are now being floated as factors holding the key to coordination over changes to the relocation plan. For one thing, the plan-depending on how to modify it-could even more seriously affect the underwater seaweed bed on which dugongs depend. For another, it would be difficult to restrict access to the waters. The government anticipates that this could help local protestors conduct even stronger campaigns against the airfield's relocation.

Nago City has asked the government to install the planned alternative facility for Futenma, including its runway, at an offshore location more than 450 meters south of its planned construction site in order to move the flight course of US military aircraft to the sea off the areas of local communities. The government rejected the proposal, maintaining that its planned reclamation from the sea is up to 10 hectares but coastal reclamation will result in filling up a wider area of the

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underwater forest. Instead, the government proposed turning the runway's direction 10 degrees.

The government wants any changes to be minor, as this would affect the restricted waters within the offing of Camp Schwab.

At the time of Okinawa's return to Japan in 1972, the Japanese and US governments agreed to set up five restricted zones off the coast of Camp Schwab. The government's planned relocation site is mostly within two off-limits zones called Area 1 within 50 meters from the shore and Area 2 within 500 meters from the shore. The construction site, if moved to an offshore area, would stretch over Area 3, where vessel access is allowed except for mooring, diving, and other continuous activities. In this case, the government deems it difficult to prevent local protesters from approaching. The government once planned to build a sea-based heliport in waters off the coast of Henoko in Nago. However, the government had to give up that offshore construction plan after encountering local protests at sea. This has become a bitter experience for the government and ruling parties.

13) In experts' talks on beef row, Japan shows understanding of US assertion "ineligible shipment was unique case;" Japan, US to start procedures for import resumption

ASAHI (Page 1) (Excerpt)  
March 30, 2006

Japan and the United States yesterday ended their two-day expert-level talks on the incident in which vertebral columns - a specified risk material (SRM) - were included in a shipment of US beef processed at two meatpacking plants in the US. Japan indicated a certain level of understanding toward the US assertion that the ineligible shipment was caused in improper meat processing at the two plants and not by any problem of the US inspection system itself. Now that both sides reached a common

understanding to some extent as to why the inappropriate beef export occurred, the two governments will soon start specific procedures with an eye on Japan's resumption of US beef imports.

14) Beef row: Japan makes concession out of consideration to US, following US admission of fault

ASAHI (Page 11) (Full)  
March 30, 2006

(Commentary)

In the Japan-US expert-level talks that ended yesterday on the issue of vertebral columns discovered in a US veal shipment to Japan, Japan made a significant compromise, indicating understanding of the assertions made by the US although it had raised questions about the US inspection system itself. With Japan's about-face, both sides reached some consensus. This development reflects Japan's consideration to the US government and Congress, which have applied pressure on Japan out of irritation at its prolonged ban on US beef imports.

Japan is worried about the possibility that more violations in shipments involving meat-processing facilities other than the plants in question could occur. It intended to express such concerns to the US side in the talks. A senior official of the

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Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Ministry had said: "There is a wide perception gap between Japan and the US."

According to Charles Lambert, acting US agriculture under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs, however, said,

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"Japan and the US reached a common understanding" on the second day of the talks. On Japan's switch in posture, a senior government official said: "Japan gave consideration to the US, which has urged Japan to swiftly resume imports using such radical expressions as 'trade war'."

In addition, the US, which had never admitted its errors, admitted its fault, saying: "It is fully conceivable that (the ineligible shipment) could have been avoided if we had improved our manuals on exports to Japan." Japan was groping for a way to come to a compromise. Japan therefore welcomed the US side's reference to its faults, with one official remarking: "We were able to avoid making a unilateral concession."

Last December, Japan decided to resume imports upon receiving a report on the results of deliberations by the Cabinet Office's Food Safety Commission. This time, though, it will be possible for the government to reopen its market only with a decision by the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Ministry and the Health, Labor, and Welfare Ministry. The two ministries have entered the stage of finding the best timing for resuming US beef imports.

15) Inching closer to resumption of US beef imports; Japan-US beef expert talks share common perception to certain extent

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 5) (Slightly abridged)  
March 30, 2006

The Japan-US beef experts wound up two days of discussion yesterday afternoon on a possible resumption of US beef imports by Japan. The Japanese side had high praise for the meeting, deeming that the two countries shared a common perception to a certain extent on the cause of the inclusion of vertebral columns in a US beef shipment, a breach of the import conditions. The governments of the two countries affirmed their intention to speed up efforts to map out measures to prevent a recurrence, including a method of inspecting US meat packers, and to move toward a reinstatement of beef trade.

Meeting the press after the session, the division director of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MOFA) of Japan



explained, "We now significantly understand why vertebral columns, a material banned in Japan as a BSE risk, were found in a US beef shipment." He indicated that in his view the bilateral talks had made progress with the two countries obtaining a common perception to a certain extent on the cause of the inclusion of the banned material.

The two meat packers that shipped the product in question exclusively handle calves, which are considered to be at low risk for BSE contamination. Unlike other ordinary cattle processing facilities, slaughtering facilities and processing facilities are separated at those plants. The Japanese side accepted that because of this situation, the circumstances of those two facilities were quite different from other facilities.

The US had thus far insisted that it was appropriate to authorize

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the two plants to export beef to Japan. It did not change that stance at the meeting this time. However, it admitted that there was an oversight on its side, noting, "There were things that needed to be improved, such as that processing procedures should have been more detailed." The Japanese side gave high marks to this statement, too.

The US government claimed that safety was secured as a whole. However, the division director after the meeting countered, "We are not convinced to that extent."

Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Lambert representing the US stressed to a press conference, "We will fully take measures to prevent a recurrence in order to ensure that the incident will not happen again." The US pledged to press ahead with efforts to implement measures to prevent a recurrence, including training of employees at meat packers, and to inspect all other plants so that similar incidents will not happen. The Japanese side will hold a briefing for representatives of consumers to explain the result of the meeting. It will also submit a report to the Food Safety Commission. The plan is to hold talks with the US to boil down matters, including a timeline for resuming imports, before the end of April at the earliest, after going through that process.

16) Report on points at issue in referendum legislation proposes theme-specific voting system

SANKEI (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
March 30, 2006

The House of Representatives' Special Committee on the Constitution, chaired by Taro Nakayama, yesterday unveiled a report on points at issue the committee will use in drafting national referendum legislation governing procedures for revising the Constitution. On the controversial issue of a voting system on constitutional amendment legislation, the report proposed a theme-specific voting system in principle. The special committee will start discussion of disputed points in its directors meeting today.

The report was worked out at unofficial talks of the Liberal Democratic Party, the New Komeito, and the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto). As for a voting formula, the three parties decided to adopt a theme-specific voting system in principle, instead of a package voting formula. Regarding rules on campaigning, the report called for "no restrictions in principle but minimum restrictions attached."

Minshuto is calling for general national referendums to be also held on key political other than a revision of the Constitution, but the ruling camp has opposed it. Given this, the report included both pros and cons of the issue.

On the voting age, the report cited these three arguments: (1) 20 years of age or older, like national elections; (2) 18 years of age or older, based on the view that wide-ranging people should be given the right to offer their opinions; and (3) 20 years of

age or older for the time being, but a change to 18 years of age or older afterward, matching that of national elections.

SCHIEFFER